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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING POLICIES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION AND OF APARTHEID, IN ALL COUNTRIES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES: REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMISSION UNDER COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTION 8 (XXIII)

Letter dated 3 August 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairman of the Sub-Commission

On behalf of the delegation of Armenia I have the honour to draw your attention to the contents of documents E/CN.4/Sub.2/1998/26 and 27 circulated by the Ambassador of Azerbaijan under agenda item 2 of the fiftieth session of the Sub-Commission. The facts, dates and figures quoted in these documents cannot be testified to or evidenced in any formal or objective way, either through official reports, the media, the reliable press, or the testimony of impartial observers.

Moreover, distributed under cover of a letter to the Sub-Commission, they countervene established practices of human rights observance, serving no other purpose than intensifying biased propaganda reflecting in a most persistent manner the intention of the Azeri leadership to launch a renewed campaign of lies against the Armenian nation.

The contents of these documents not only deform the historical progression of events in the region but dramatically distort the reality. Ever since Azerbijan appeared on the world map in 1918, history has witnessed gross violations of human rights resulting in a large-scale war in 1918-1920, launched by Azerbaijan and assisted by the Ottoman Empire, against Nagorny-Karabagh which culminated in arbitrary deportations and the mass killings of Armenians.

The picture would be completely different and the roles of aggressor and victim totally reversed if one bothered to shed a historical light on the true reasons for the rise of violence and the circumstances that triggered dramatic violations of all fundamental human rights and freedoms of Armenians living in Nagorny-Karabagh which, in 1923, was transferred, arbitrarily and without its consent, to the jurisdiction of Azerbaijan following an illegal decision of the Soviet Bolshevik Party. If one were to do so, the Azerbaijani versions contained in the above-mentioned documents would be revealed as being as far removed from the truth as the tales of an ill-willed storyteller.

In 1988, Azerbaijan - at that time still a Soviet Republic - proceeded to arbitrary executions and detentions, mass killings and persecution, the burning down and the pillage of regions of majority Armenian population in the cities of Sumgait, Kirovabad, Shushi and Baku, paving the way to hatred-laden acts of a rare cruelty and giving a first-hand demonstration of Azerbaijan's concept of peaceful coexistence with regard to ethnically different minorities living on its territories.

The Azeri aggression was perpetrated in response to the lawful desire of the Nagorny-Karabakh population to constitutionally re-establish its self-rule. Refuting all efforts to set up an internationally and legally acceptable secession procedure which would respect and realize this will, the Azerbaijani Government tried to stifle it by resorting to arms and launching a military offensive against the Armenian civilian population of the region.

Wrongly condemned for expansionism and nationalism by Azerbaijan, Armenians have never waged war against the latter. Throughout 70 years of Soviet rule, the Nagorny-Karabakh Armenians have only claimed their constitutional right to self-determination.

Today, it is clear that Azerbaijan has not yet once envisaged relinquishing its radical, aggressive and expansionist positions deeply rooted in false readings of history and an alarmingly emotional, as opposed to a factual, assessment of reality motivated by single-minded propaganda and interests. It has turned its back on the possibility of a realistic, flexible solution, respecting the interests of all concerned, of the issue of Nagorny-Karabakh based on the implementation and the respect of principles of international law.

Unfortunately, it has not yet come to terms with the modern concepts of regional entente and cooperation, nor has it followed the trend of regional development without discrimination or favouritism, with the aim of improving trade and socio-economic relations with its neighbours by engaging in a non-violent and constructive dialogue for the benefit of all.

Although the Azeri leadership seems to be unaware of the fact that the next millennium will no longer tolerate the political aspirations of territorial domination and supremacy tightly covered by impunity and the convenient procedure of "putting the blame on others", Armenia is convinced that the ideal of peace in the region can only be attained by replacing nationalistic interests with wide participation in meaningful and peaceful projects.

In conclusion, my delegation strongly condemns the attempts at politicization of human rights expert bodies by Azerbaijan, aimed at securing the success of the forthcoming presidential election campaign in Baku. We believe the Sub-Commission should no longer tolerate such "procedures" which only serve limited State interests.

I would be grateful if you would circulate the present letter as an official document of the fiftieth session of the Sub-Commission under item 2 of the agenda.

(Signed) Karen NAZARIAN
Permanent Representative